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An Abstract History of the Otaheitean Mission from its commencement in 1796 to Dec 1832

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The spread of the gospel has ever been desirable to the Christian.

In no age has the believer who has experienced the blessings of an interest in a Saviour ceased to pray for the desirable hour when all should be brought to a knowledge of the truth, when all should know the Lord to the saving of the soul. His compassion has extended beyond the narrow circle of his relations or the limits of his acquaintance. Possessing the vital principle of love he is desirous of doing goode not only to his friends but wishes well to his enemies. " " "

As the love of God prompted many in primitive days to lay down their lives for their brethren and expose themselves to many dangers for the sake of carrying the glad tidings of salvation to a perishing world, so in later times

the true disciple has endeavoured by every means in his power to invite the whole human race to come and also partake of the blessings of the new covenant When it was known to the Christians of modern days how many thousands and millions of the human race were scattered over the face of the earth destitute of a knowledge of the true God and worshipping dumb idols, the workmanship of their own hands compassion moved their hearts and they anxiously enquired what could be done to save the souls of those who knew not God

Removed at an almost impassable distance from most of the idolatrous nations the believers benevolence seemed likely to produce no beneficial effect. The scantiness of means possessed by any individual appeared an insuperable obstacle to any effectual exertion and to human appearance the

heathen must perish in their sins or God must work a miracle for their deliverance — The distressed state however of those perishing souls roused many of God's people and at once the energies of many in concert being exerted finally devised a plan to give them the Gospel and make them acquainted with the plan of salvation through a Redeemer ——

Many pious clergymen in London and its vicinity having long wished to send the Gospel to the heathen thought a society might be formed in which the exertions of many being united they would be better able to accomplish the desirable object. For this purpose in the beginning of the year 1795 they began to make known their intentions & letters were written to several pious ministers in different parts of the kingdom and some spirited addresses

made to the public to unite with them in this great undertaking.

A meeting was held in Sept.r following at which great numbers attended and every denomination seemed anxious to know how they might assist in a work which from its idea to be of so much benefit to mankind. — — — — — —

A society was formed and about £350 was immediately subscribed and placed in the hands of 25 directors for the beneficial purposes abovementioned. In looking for a favourable situation for missionaries the Islands of the South Sea presented a large field for their labours where were many thousands of human beings enwrapped in more than Egyptian darkness who from their apparent inoffensiveness and docility seemed likely to receive the Gospel. In May 1796 a second meeting of the society was held and

19 missionaries selected who declared themselves willing to leave their native home to carry the Gospel to those who were perishing for lack of vision.

Soon after more offered their services and on the 28th of July of the same yr 24 single and 6 married missionaries were set apart for the above service.

A ship was immediately prepared by the Society and on the 10th of Aug they embarked at London and after a pleasant voyage of nearly 7 months arrived safe at Otaheite on the 6th March 1797. They had been provided with every necessary both for the voyage and also for a small establishment where they should think proper to settle.

Twelve single and 5 married brethren were left at Otaheite (the others being carried to some of the neighbouring Islands) where they were received with respect and courtesy by Pomare and all the father of the king, and all the

except Otoo the Sovereign seemed well pleased with the intentions of the missionaries in coming to settle among them.

A district called Matavai in the northern part of the Island was ceded to them & a building erected by Pomarre was also given up to them for a store house.

The brethren considering themselves surrounded by rude barbarians thought best to settle in the same place for their mutual assistance in case of danger and for this purpose commenced building houses for their future accommodation. The missionaries soon found they had many difficulties to encounter and many trials awaited them which they little expected. The language hitherto deemed easy of acquisition they found difficult of pronunciation and having no person who had any grammatical knowledge of it to assist them they were under the necessity of interpreting words & sentences as they fell from the lips of this rude and uncultivated people

Their

Their progress was of course slow and a length of time must necessarially pass before they could say anything on the subject of their errand— And in addition to this the natives were found to be destitute of honour or honesty. Every opportunity of stealing was embraced and the missionaries were under the necessity of guarding their property and for this purpose were many times compelled to place a sentry around their dwelling during the night.

Nor let it be supposed vices were to be found among the lower class of people only. The Sovereign Otoo and his mother Edeea were equally abandoned

Human sacrifices were frequently offered and often on the most trifling occasions. The murder of infants was not only tolerated but thought honourable. A society called the Areoies were under an obligation from an article of their compact to destroy all their offspring.

Matrimony was nothing but a

name and (vices) of the most degrading kind were indulged in and without shame and apparently without remorse. Witnessing scenes like these the brethren were fired with indignation and animated with the hope of restraining such vicious passions as appeared to govern these heathen began manfully to remonstrate against such inhuman and diabolical practices. So powerful was their godly example and so cogent the reasons given by them for such a measure that not only did they bring the natives generally into an apparent disapprobation of such conduct but Otoo himself tho' not favourably inclined towards them promised it should cease.

The degeneracy however of this people was so great and their inclination to iniquity so irresistible that no sooner had the novelty of the scene worn off than they relapsed into their former habits and soon refused to notice the

the advice of the missionaries and soon became so assuming as to interrupt them in the midst of their discourse by exclaiming "lies lies" And altho the chiefs frequently sent presents of provisions to the brethren yet they wanted twice their value in return and the missionaries considered them either as artifices to put them off their guard or as articles of merchandise

During the yr 1797 the brethren were blessed with health and peace and nothing more particular occurred

Every attention was paid to the study of the language every possible exertion made for preaching the gospel

Keeping in mind the object for which they came to these dark regions early in 1798 they drew up an address to the chiefs explaining their reasons for coming there and shewing the advantages which would be the result of their becoming civilized and particularly

exhorting them to desist from destroying infants telling them it would depopulate their islands and ruin their government. With this they appeared well pleased and promised the practice should be discontinued. They however paid no regard to their obligations but added fresh crimes to former iniquities and murdered them as before. In the month of March 1798 four of the brethren having occasion to visit the visit chiefs were on the way attacked by the natives and stripped naked and expected every moment to be put to death but a party with whom they were acquainted came to their relief and brought them to Pomare who went with them to Otoo to know the reason of the insult offered to the missionaries. He however said but little on the subject and from several circumstances appears to have been one of the principle instigators of the deed.

Pomare being enraged at this

insult undertook to revenge the injury
and although entreated by them to let it pass unnoticed yet actually put two men to death
for which a war was proclaimed against
him and the whole island was soon
in a tumultuous state the natives
threatening to wreak their vengeance
on the missionaries. These disturbances
were very afflicting to the brethren to
to whom there was no prospect of
usefulness while affairs remained thus
unsettled and as they were frequently
alarmed with reports of the natives
coming to attack them at a meeting
called to consult what should be done
a majority concluded from the present
state of the island it was advisable
to leave it & go to N.Z Jackson—n——

Seven however relying on the protecting
hand of God determined to remain and
endeavour by every means in their power
to soften the rude and savage manners
of this idolatrous nation & notwithstanding

the dangers and trials to which the knew they would be exposed and the arguments used to dissuade them from such a hazardous undertaking continued steadfastly to adhere to the resolution they had formed.

Another trial awaited those faithful soldiers of the cross which they little expected a trial doubly distressing on account of the consequences likely to follow both dishonourable to the character of christians and calculated to diminish their influence. One of their number Mr Thos Lewis an ordained minister left the brethren and went to reside with a native some small distance from them. His conduct had been noticed as being indecent & for which he had been reproved but he did not reform and when the brethren refused to marry him to one of the natives an idolatress he left them & lived with her as his wife. Not long after he was found dead with evident marks of violence but such as made it impossible to determine whether he was murdered or committed suicide

Nothing very particular occurred during the remainder of the year. Pomarre & wife appeared friendly but the natives apparently were more vicious than ever. — —

During the year 1799 they enjoyed good health and peace and were active in acquiring the language in which they daily found new difficulties. — Early in 1800 Mr Harris left them expecting to return soon and shortly after Mr & Mrs Henry returned from P. Jackson to resume their labours

As those who will live godly in Christ Jesus will frequently meet many trials so these heralds of the cross had another most afflicting and painful scene to witness viz the defection of another of their number who renounced the faith and doubted the future existence of the soul and whose conduct evinced that he was still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity

The beginning of 1801 was similar to the preceding year the brethren had no reason to believe any soul had as yet been benefitted by their visiting them. Peace and many blessings attended the brethren. The natives were sometimes heard to converse on what had been said by the missionaries. On the 10th July a ship arrived from England bringing 8 missionaries to the great joy of the brethren there. — —

They had as yet never preached publicly for want of a knowledge of the language

On the 26th Feby 1802 two of the missionaries began a tour of preaching which lasted to 5th of April. They were listened to with attention and treated humanely. In March a war broke out which prevented the missionaries travelling around the Island. But that God who rules all things according to the counsel of his own will overruled even this for good as it brought numbers together from different parts who desired to have the gospel preached to himbut Pomare still continued his idolatry and sacrificed a number of human beings to his God &c. In Oct three of the brethren went abroad again to preach the gospel. They however met with more difficulties in this than the former attempt. They found it almost impossible to collect the natives even in small numbers and were often treated with ridicule and contempt. In the course of the year 1803 the natives watched them with a jealous eye and paid no regard to their advice which nearly discouraged them. The death of Pomare which took place on the 3 of Sept was much lamented by the brethren as he had been their friend and

protector and they were very apprehensive of the consequences which might follow but no change however took place Otoo who now assumed the title of Pomarre became more friendly. During the year 1804 they redoubled their exertions for the instruction of children but with little success as their dispositions would submit to no restraint. The natives appeared more daringly impious. Otoo now Pomarre on being exhorted by two brethren said he did not believe a word they said.

By the 10th of July 1805 Pomarre had made such progress in the English language as to write a short letter to the Directors of the Missionary Society. In March 1806 Mr & Mrs Shelly left Tahiite for P. Jackson not expecting to return. During this year Pomarre seemed very averse to hear religious instruction and always evaded it if possible. During this year the mission sent 3 vols in the Tahitean language to England for publication a grammar vocabulary and catechism. In 1807 they sent a spelling book. A war broke out this year but peace was restored in Oct and the brethren had more hope of success in instructing children. The death of Mr Jefferson which happened this year added much to

their grief. not only as it diminished their number but as he was eminently useful and well calculated for the important station he occupied. Another Mr Bond left there for Pt Jackson Pomare wrote a letter to the directors which was a specimen of that simplicity for which he was so eminent. The year 1808 was peaceful and the missionaries were much encouraged and hoped a few have died in the Lord. One seaman also was much interested on hearing the missionaries preach and was afterward highly useful to his fellow seamen being instrumental it was hoped in bringing sixteen to a knowledge of the truth. — — —

In Oct a war broke out which seemed to disturb the whole island and to such a degree that it prevented the missionaries from any attempt to preach as they had done by going to every part of the kingdom. They therefore thought best to leave Taheite 'till some more favourable opportunity should offer of spreading the gospel there. Accordingly three single & three married missionaries embarked on the 30th of Nov & were next day landed at Huaheine. Four single brethren continued with Pomarre determined to remain if —

possible but if found impracticable to embrace some other opportunity of going to P^t Jackson — Pomarre appeared to be deeply concerned for the missionaries and thought of going with them. — — —

On the 3^d of April 1809 two of the brethren that remained at Taheite arrived at Huahaine and informed Pomarre peace had been defeated that his enemies had overrun the district of Matavai & destroyed all the property belonging to the missionaries and were complete masters of the island. They also brought a letter from Pomarre expressing his good wishes for them and requesting them to return to Taheite when peace should be restored. On the 22 July another of the brethren arrived and informed that the whole island was in possession of the rebels and the government as unsettled as ever. They now concluded all prospects of usefulness at Taheite for the present were at an end and therefore resolved to embrace the first opportunity of going to P^t Jackson except Mr Hayward who came last from Taheite and who determined to return thither.

Accordingly they embarked in the brig Hibernia on the 26^th Aug^t 1809 and after a dangerous voyage arrived at P^t Jackson Jan^y 17^th 1810

By letters to the directors dated 25th Oct. 1810 they signified to them they had not relinquished their mission but were willing to resume their labours if means were provided for their conveyance & support

Accordingly in July 1811 three males & 3 females embarked at Port Jackson and arrived safely at Norfolk Island after a passage of 12 days and in Sept. they were followed by 4 more. They had been informed peace was restored and Pomare had written to them a pressing invitation to return.

Two brethren have continued with Pomare during all the disturbance which had taken place. After so many years labour with little apparent success it might seem justifiable to relinquish the idea of establishing & spreading the gospel among a people so prone to idolatry and abandoned to every species of iniquity and even commendable to take it from them & give it to other nations more likely to bring forth its fruits in their season. — — —

But these faithful disciples of Jesus having trusted in God to prosper their undertakings and earnestly besought him to bless their labours were not easily discouraged but continued to labour in the garden hoping and believing they should finally reap an abundant harvest and God, who never forgets his children

was pleased to grant them the object of their
desires. On the 8th of July 1812 Pomarre
after closely investigating the subject declared
himself convinced that Jehovah was the only
true God and desired to be baptised in his
name. The brethren although much pleased &
believing him a real convert yet thought
prudent to delay this rite, he should evince
his sincerity by his future conduct to which
he readily assented but desired immediately to
build a house for worship. The missionaries
have the great pleasure to see Pomarre entirely
leave his idols and even when at a distance
from them (missionaries) regularly observe the
Sabbath and try to persuade others around
him likewise to embrace the gospel.

Some few more they hope also
have been made the monuments of God's
mercy. They are now much encouraged
and hope they shall be useful and instrumental
in the hands of God in bringing
many souls to a knowledge of the truth.

Laid before the Society of Enquiry
on Missions March 1. 1815

by. S. Saunders